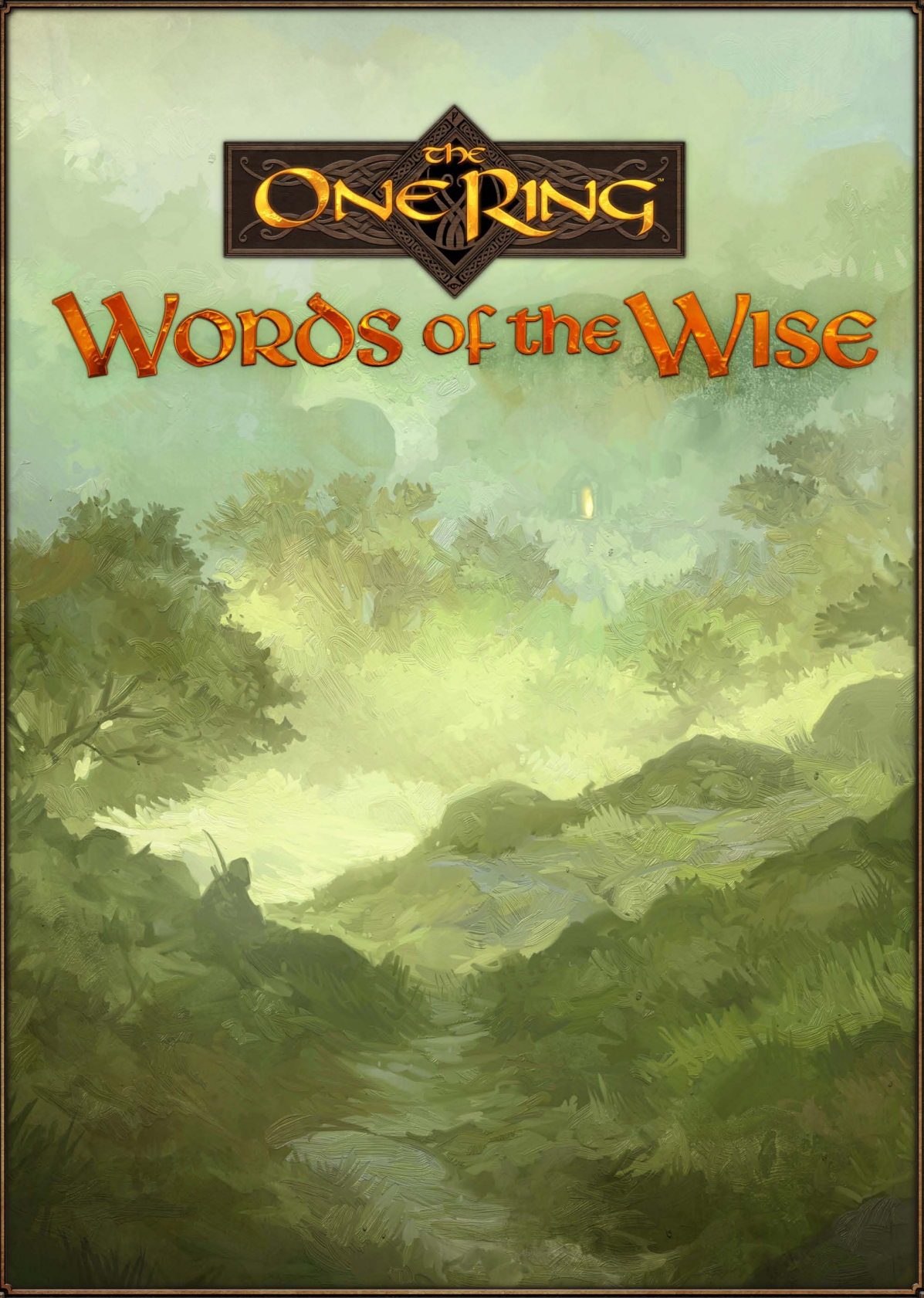
The One Ring

Words of the Wise



~ Credits ~

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The guidelines for evaluating the outcome of an encounter are loosely based on the 'Encounter boons' house rules by Luke "Skywalker" Walker.

We wrote this adventure for GenCon 2011 where we were launching *The One Ring: Adventures over the Edge of the Wild*. It's great to see the fully designed version, and fun to be reminded of the anticipation we all had prior to publication. We are all tremendously pleased by the response to the game and this complimentary PDF is a thank you for your enthusiasm, involvement and passion.

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- Words - of the Wise

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest at any time, ideally in early spring.

- **Where:** The adventure begins near Rhosgobel, along the western eaves of Southern Mirkwood.

- **What:** The characters are hunting with the Woodmen of Rhosgobel when the hunting party is attacked by a group of Orcs. The wizard Radagast fears that some agency is organising the Orcs to raze Woodland Hall. Radagast writes to the Elvenking of Woodland Realm, and the players are asked to courier the letter.

- **Why:** The characters face an uncertain welcome in the Elvenking's halls, as Radagast's letter is a plea for aid – something King Thranduil is loathe to provide for fear of weakening his own defenses.

- **Who:** The companions get to meet Radagast, and then the Elvenking. The players' handling of this last encounter will determine the kind of aid they return to Rhosgobel with.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into four parts.

Part One - Blooding

The company finds adventure after having wintered in Rhosgobel as guests of the Woodmen of Wilderland. There, they listen to the counsel of a wizard.

Part Two - Journey to the Woodland Realm

The companions head north, to seek advice from the wise Elves of Mirkwood.

Part Three - Beyond the Forest Gate

Where the companions have an unexpected encounter, with unpredictable results.

Part Four - The Battle of Woodland Hall

The heroes return to defend the land of the Woodmen. They fight a bitter battle, with a wizard at their side.

- Part One - Blooding

The following description provides a narrative introduction to the game. It is written to give a new company a bit of back story so that they can jump right into the action. It can also give the Loremaster the seed of a future adventure. Feel free to amend this to suit your group of players.

The characters have wintered at Rhosgobel following their first adventure together. They met at the Gathering of the Five Armies, where a number of young idealistic individuals congregated in the hopes of contributing to the resurgence of the Free Peoples. Adventure soon followed when they were tasked with investigating rumours of a shadowy figure seen visiting the vicinity of Dol Guldur. The company bonded during the arduous trek to the fallen fortress, and during the long vigil that followed. Finally observing the figure they had sought, they disrupted its attempts to enter the keep, but did not get close enough to uncover the being's identity. They did feel its dread power, which overcame them, forcing them to flee. Recovering their courage in the cold light of day, they steeled themselves to resume watch, but did not catch another glimpse of the figure.

Unsure of how to proceed, and with winter closing in around them, the company travelled to Rhosgobel to consult Radagast the Brown and see out the cold weather. The Woodmen welcomed the company to their settlement and gave them shelter over the winter. Radagast spoke with them on the nature of their quest and experiences and retired to consider the matter. As the weather began to break, the Woodmen asked the company to help them gather in some food on one of the many hunting expeditions setting out.

And so the game begins.

The Hunt

The characters make up a hunting party with four Woodmen: brothers Amalric & Evoric, Heva and Thorismund. The Loremaster can read aloud the paragraphs shown in italics.

As the hunting parties gather inside the gates of Rhosgobel's wooden palisade, a crowd gathers to celebrate the occasion and wish for a bountiful day. Children laugh and scream as they chase each other through the assembled throng. Dogs bark in excitement, eager to be off. Woodsmoke adds a pungent texture to the crisp morning air.

In front of the gates, the chiefs of the village's most prominent families draw their conversation to a close and bid each other good hunting. As they return to the parties they are leading, the gates are unbarred and swung open to the sound of hunting horns and the cheers of the settlement. The cheering continues as the Woodmen depart on the first hunt of the year. You take your places in the procession, following Amalric, the leader of your party. Once you are outside the palisade he leads you east, towards the forest.

The day is overcast and dew is thick on the grass as you approach Mirkwood. The world has the feel of having not yet fully woken up. The Woodmen seem in good spirits, competing with ever more outrageous claims of what they will be bringing back to the village at the end of the day. The hounds are racing ahead, chasing each other through the meadow, periodically returning as though demanding that you try to keep up with them.

The players should be given an opportunity for talking with Amalric, Evoric, Heva and Thorismund as the group walks towards the forest.

Amalric and his younger brother **Evoric** will only talk of the hunt, but can tell the players of the deer, wild pigs and rabbits that can be found in this part of the forest. Amalric will caution the characters to be on their guard, as 'stranger creatures than that can sometimes be found in these parts'. He will question the characters on their hunting abilities, and assign their roles during the day according to his perception of their skills.

- Player-heroes wanting to impress Amalric might make **Hunting** rolls to prove their experience in the field, or even challenge the two brothers in a boasting contest about who will return with the most prized quarry, making rolls of **Awe**.

Heva is a warrior, and will talk on a range of subjects. She is of a similar mindset to the players, seeing the possibilities in the world now that the Necromancer has been vanquished and the Orcs are diminished following the Battle of Five Armies. But her focus is very much on the Woodmen, rather than the wider Free Peoples. Thorismund lost his wife to a malady during the previous winter when an ill wind from Dol Guldur hit their lands, and is reluctant to be drawn into conversation.

At the edge of the forest the dogs are leashed, to prevent them scaring off prey prematurely. They strain at the unwelcome restraint.

The hunting parties reach the eaves of the forest. Allow the characters to head into Mirkwood in any way they want. Give them options to explore, tracks to follow etc. The undergrowth is dense to either side of the path that the party are following.

- A **Hunting** roll reveals tracks that head down the path ahead of them (a great success reveals that the tracks were made by deer, an extraordinary success reveals that the tracks are no more than an hour old).

The track eventually leads towards a clearing, and Amalric gestures for everyone to stay back while he has a closer look. He crawls forward slowly, then slowly returns.

"There are some deer and a stag. The four of us will go for the stag, while you get as many of the deer as you can."

The companions may quickly agree with the plan, or propose to switch prey - facing the consequences (a stag is a more difficult quarry to catch unawares).

When they are set upon their choices, Amalric unclasps a hunting horn from his belt and hands it over to one of the characters (choose randomly or based upon how the characters have fared in their dealings with the Woodmen).

> *"If we get separated, use this to help us find you. My brother will do the same with his if we lose you. Let's go – quietly!"*

- The companions are now following their prey on their own. **Stealth** rolls against a *moderate* difficulty (TN 14) are required to get to the edge of the clearing without being detected by deer, while rolls made to approach the stag are *hard* (TN 16).

If someone fails, the prey (deer or stag) begins to run (see *The Chase* below), otherwise characters may get one ranged attack from the edge of the clearing.

- The difficulty for ranged attacks is a *hard* TN 16. The stag has Endurance 12, and the deer have Endurance 7. A wound kills the animal, and any endurance loss makes it possible for the characters to catch up with it.

The Chase

If the characters chase their prey, they start running as they are joined by the hunting hounds of the folk of Rhosgobel, that pursue the deer preventing them from disappearing into the undergrowth.

- A successful **Athletics** roll lets a hero momentarily keep up with his prey (he can make a ranged attack, but the TN of subsequent chase rolls increases by two), a great success lets him keep up with it and make a ranged attack, and an extraordinary success means that he can make an attack and also catch up a little (TN of subsequent rolls is decreased by two). Failure means that the character has lost the prey (and any of their companions still chasing them).

An animal that has lost Endurance points begin to lag behind the rest. A character can stop chasing the main group to focus on a straggler. They make an easy **Athletics** roll (TN12) to catch up with the deer enough to use a close combat weapon, but even if they fail they can still make a ranged attack. They can only lose the injured deer if they fail the roll and get a icon on their Feat die.

Orc Attack

The hunt goes on until all companions are done with their pursuit, or until players seem to be getting tired of it. It is then that the sound of a horn blasts out, close by. Three strong blasts followed by one that cuts off in the middle with a squeal. Characters who investigate soon hear the sounds of battle, the snarling and barking of dogs, shouts of the Woodmen and other, more guttural voices - Orcs!

A band of savage goblins is attacking the hunting party on a track in the dense woodland. Amalric stands over his brother Evoric, who is lying unconscious with several black arrows in his chest. He is wounded and desperately trying to keep two snarling Orcs at bay. Heva and Thorismund face three Orcs and are sorely pressed. Another three Goblin archers are firing steadily from where the track ascends a gentle hill. As the characters take in the scene, an arrow takes Thorismund down.

- If the players charge straight in, treat the Onset of the combat as though it is uncertain who is the attacker and who is the defender – ie. the character with the highest **Battle** rating rolls against the highest *Vocation* skill of their opponents (1, in this case) to determine which side holds the initiative. If the players want to ambush/surprise the Orcs, they need to all make **Stealth** rolls to succeed (see page 43 of the LM book for details).

The Orc-band is composed of five Orc Soldiers and three Goblin archers. As they are fighting under the shadows of the wood they do not suffer from their *Hate sunlight* weakness, but the Goblin archers do not profit from their *Denizen of the dark* advantage either. Use the Woodmen as your balancing factor in the fight – if it is going well then have them go down easily or drop back, wounded. If it is going poorly for the characters then the Woodmen can even the numbers by engaging a few of the Orcs.

Aftermath

After the fight, all surviving companions can recover and have the time to gather their wits and take care of the dead and wounded.

- If anyone cares to examine their attackers, a successful **Lore** roll recognises the goblins as such, and thus Orcs belonging to a mountain breed (if a companion has the *Shadow-lore* or *Orc-lore* Trait, he can be given an automatic success).

If none of the characters think to, one of the Woodmen will suggest taking some token from the Orcs's gear back to Rhosgobel.

Back to Rhosgobel

When the companions finally head back towards Rhosgobel they soon discover that they were not the only hunting party to have been attacked. Several hunters return with news of bloody skirmishes or at least of disturbing sightings. When they reach the gates of the village they find that the townsfolk is busy tending the wounded and barring up the town, while messengers leave to warn the other Woodmen settlements of the threat.

The Counsel of a Wizard

Soon after their arrival, the companions see Radagast striding purposefully in their direction, as if he was waiting for them to arrive. He follows them as they bring their wounded to the great hall and assists them with sage advice as they treat the injured.

- Any **Healing** roll made in the presence of Radagast sees its TN lowered to an *easy* level (TN 12).

When the emergency is over, the wizard asks the companions to tell him their story and asks for any details they can remember that might identify the origins of the attackers. Upon seeing what they have to show and listening to their words, Radagast seems lost in deep thought, until he confirms that the Orcs most likely hail from the distant Misty Mountains...

Additional queries from the player-heroes may tease some more information out of the musing wizard (the most applicable roll is probably **Riddle** here): these marauding Orcs are most likely survivors of the Battle of Five Armies who found refuge under the eaves of Mirkwood. Nonetheless, it is highly unusual to see this number of Orcs this far south; such an occurrence is certainly not the product of mere ill fortune. If prodded, Radagast mutters something about unexpected developments to the North, before suddenly turning to face the characters:

> *"You must take a message to the Woodland Realm. I believe that the Elvenking could aid us in determining the cause and solution to this problem. Wait here; I must compose this message... delicately."*

He leaves the hall, deep in thought, and returns an hour later.

"If Thranduil proves obstinate, remind him that the Beast is terrible, and that if its gaze was no longer focussed on the Woodmen, it would quickly turn North. If there is any indication that the Orcs are organised by some agency... matters are dangerous indeed. Go swiftly. There is no time to lose!"

If the companions are full of questions and cannot be dismissed quickly by Radagast, he tells them that the Woodmen guard a secret capable of keeping the darkness of Mirkwood at bay. He suspects that a malevolent force has turned the Orcs to the destruction of this secret, and that would spell disaster for the Free Peoples.

- Part 2 -
Journey to the Woodland Realm

The ideal itinerary to the Woodland Realm's borders sees the company travel north along the western eaves of Mirkwood, up to the point where the Old Forest Road enters the forest. From there, they must go north across the land of the Beornings up to the Forest Gate, hurrying past Beorn's House as they have no time to lose, but enjoying the greater safety of the area, as ensured by the Beornings' watch. (If you or the group you are playing with are interested in improvising an encounter with Beorn, you may refer to the information found on page 112 of the Loremaster's Book).

Once at the gates of Mirkwood, they will enter the forest to take the same Elf-path that Bilbo and his companions took five years ago: approximately 200 miles of dense forest divide the Forest Gate from the Elvenking's Halls. But hopefully the company won't need to cover the whole distance...

- To reach the Old Forest Road, the company marches across the land of the Woodmen for 140 miles, on well-trod paths along the edge of the forest of Mirkwood (easy terrain). In spring, the journey takes seven days. Each companion is required to take two Fatigue tests (TN 14).
- To reach the Forest Gate, the heroes cut through the land of the Beornings for 110 miles (again easy terrain). The journey takes six days, and each companion must pass two Fatigue tests (TN 12).

Any encounter hazard triggered by bad Fatigue rolls shouldn't have to do with evil creatures, as the company is travelling across a relatively safe area. But if you are feeling nasty, a 'Hunter becomes prey' Hazard episode could be a Giant spider, possibly attracted by the company's campfire during a night when they stopped too near to the edge of Mirkwood.

- Part 3 -
Beyond the Forest Gate

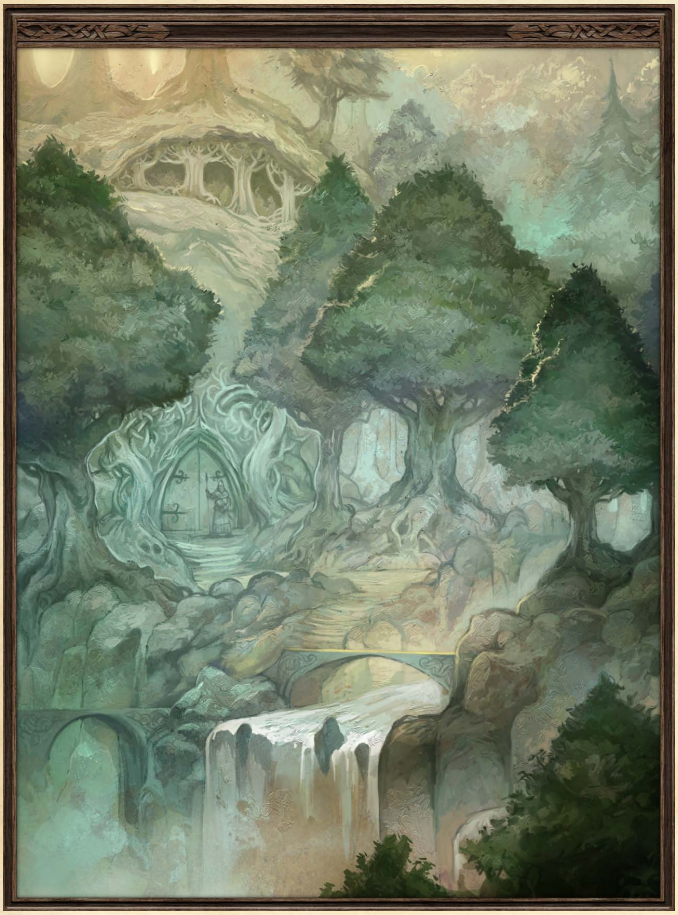
The characters are met by a Wood Elf patrol soon after they enter Mirkwood. The armed party doesn't seem surprised by the presence of the adventurers, as if they knew they were arriving somehow - when the company left Rhosgobel, Radagast sent words of warning to the Elves through his animal friends (but couldn't trust them with any more sensible information, like anything concerning the true goal of the company).

If the players show Radagast's letter to the Elves they will be invited to follow the patrol and wait for the arrival of an envoy in a secret location, albeit with a fair amount of suspicion: all companions will be asked to cover their eyes in a blindfold.

- If you set up the scene as an encounter, it is possible that the players succeed in introducing themselves in an appropriate way: if this happens, they will be treated more courteously, and will enjoy a bonus of +1 to the Tolerance rating for their audience with the envoy (the Elvenking himself, in disguise).

To the Forest Citadel

If the players let their characters follow the Elf patrol, they will leave the Elf-path to go north; following secret trails, the company will reach the Forest River in a couple of days. Then, the characters are taken across a narrow stone bridge over a swiftly running river. Ahead of them, hidden among ancient trees, a great gate opens on the side of a carven rock face: the entrance to the Forest Citadel. A guard confers briefly with the patrol before allowing them into an elegantly carved and decorated entrance chamber.



Waiting for an Audience

When the gates shut behind the company, the companions are greeted by an aloof courtier, who talks in elvish with the patrol leader before leading them into a corridor branching off to the left of the chamber. The corridor has several doors on either side, and the characters are led into the third room to the right. It is functionally appointed with a table and chairs.

The courtier asks the characters for Radagast's message and tells them that they are to wait here for further instructions. He then leaves (with the message if they hand it over), and two Elves from the patrol remain in the room while the other head out. A further two Elves stand just outside the door. Minutes later two plainly-dressed Elves bring a fine metal jug of water and earthenware beakers. Not a word is spoken. The water is delicious.

If the characters insist on giving the message to the Elvenking personally, the courtier looks at them with shock and disdain, asking if they dare to insult the Woodland Realm, questioning the honour of a trusted subject of the King. If they hold out, they are left to stew.

The Envoy Arrives

The characters are left for two to four hours, depending on how well they co-operate. The guards will not interact with them, or let them leave. Finally, the courtier returns and announces that the envoy of the Elvenking has arrived and wants to see them immediately. They are led back to the entrance chamber and down another winding corridor that broadens out into a larger chamber with ornately carved pillars, beautiful hanging fabrics and tapestries, lit by lanterns and candles.

The envoy of the Elvenking is a tall Elf, clad in a wide cloak and tall hunting boots - his clothing is stained with mud, as that of someone who has travelled in haste, but his countenance, as can be spied under his hood, doesn't show traces of weariness.

A Regal Encounter

As Caranthir (the Elf pregenerated character provided in the Adventurer's Book) can easily divine if he is present, the envoy is no less than the Elvenking in person - when doubts about his identity are dispelled, King Thranduil lets the courtiers take care of his travelling gear and finally sits on a magnificent wooden high seat, as his attendants and courtiers surround him.

Set Tolerance

All eyes are on the characters as they approach the King. The Tolerance rating of the encounter is based on Valour, modified by a bonus of +1 (the encounter has been sponsored by Radagast) and eventually by a second

modifier of +1 if the companions have impressed the patrol positively, or -1 if they insisted on delivering the message personally.

Evaluating the outcome of the Encounter
The Loremaster can evaluate the outcome of the encounter by keeping track of how many successful rolls the player-heroes achieve during its Introduction and Interaction stages. Every successful roll counts for one, while a great success equates to two successful rolls and an extraordinary result to three successful rolls.

Introduction
The Elvenking waits for the companions to introduce themselves appropriately. **Courtesy** or **Awe** are the best approaches, and their difficulty rating is set at TN 16, while **Riddle** will arouse suspicion (TN 18).

Interaction
Thranduil regards the companions grimly for a moment, before beginning to speak (first reading the message if they have only just handed it over). He was hunting in the woods to the north when words of warning from Radagast's bird-friends arrived to his ear, and he is displeased - seldom have the worries of Men or wizards proved to be of any worth to his cause.

He is suspicious of this intrusion, and will not mind his manners. His questions run along the following lines:

"Are you aware of the contents of this message?"

"What are your opinions of the matter?"

"Of what concern is it to me that Orcs intrude on the territory of the Woodmen? Surely mere Orc raids are not sufficient cause to see plots in their mindless rampages."

"Does Radagast see fit to make the Elves vulnerable? What if this plot he perceives is a decoy to weaken our defences?"

The companions are expected to answer fully and truthfully. Then, they are given licence to ask the king questions, and gradually the encounter turns into a more informal meeting, as it becomes clearer that everyone is on the same side. The companions can ask appropriate questions using **Courtesy**, **Riddle**, **Persuade** or **Insight**, for example.

If the characters ask if the king knows why the Orcs are suddenly ranging far to the south of the Mountains of Mirkwood, or asks anything about the Beast of Mirkwood, they get an answer based on the result of the roll used to ask the question:

Failure – They are Orcs, that's what they do. The Beast is a maddened monster howling in the mountains.

Success – the borders of the realm north to the Mountains of Mirkwood have been quiet of late. There have been sightings of winged things coming and going in the mountains.

Great Success – Some of these visits have been in the vicinity of where the Beast's lair is suspected to be.

Extraordinary Success – The winged beasts were creatures of darkness.

- If the characters ask for aid from the Elves and they didn't exceed the Tolerance of the encounter, by the end of the meeting compare the number of successful rolls they achieved during the episode with the entries given below.

0-1: *"Impossible. We have enough to deal with here."*

2-4: *"I will send a patrol to escort you back safely and lend aid to the Woodmen."*

5-7: *"I will send a war party back with you."*

8 or more: *"Saddle my horse! I will bring my personal guard and speak with Radagast myself."*

At the outcome of the audience, the characters are either shown the door and told to be clear of Elven lands within a day, or are shown to guest rooms to spend the night while an expedition is gathered. In the latter case, they will depart the following morning.

The Road Home

To play the return trip, refer to the journey description given in Part 2 and play it backwards. If the companions are escorted back by the Elves, consider that all their Fatigue rolls succeed automatically, as the Elves act as guide, scouts, huntsmen, and so on.

- Part 4 -
The Battle of Woodland Hall

If the characters head for Rhosgobel, they make it back and let Radagast know what they have learnt. The Elvenking will talk with Radagast if he has accompanied them. The course of action is the same regardless of the information they bring back, other than to affect the level of certainty Radagast has.

Radagast (and Thranduil) quickly formulate a plan, and gather all able-bodied Woodmen to head north for Woodland Hall. They stop at Woodmen Town to gather reinforcements and send small patrols out to scout for the enemy and warn isolated farmsteads, then travel quickly on to Woodland Hall. After a council of war with the Woodmen chiefs, scouts report back that a large Orc warband is approaching the settlement. Thranduil asks for hay bales and other combustibles – the Orcs will attack at night.

If the companions want to participate in the organisation of the defenses, let them. They can discuss their suggestions with the Woodmen and Elves, for example rolling **Battle** to elaborate their strategies, or using **Inspire** or **Awe** to reinforce their opinions.

- If the companions suggest clever defensive ploys, you can award them with 1-3 extra Success dice as additional Combat advantages.

The Assault

The Orcs attack at night, and their onslaught is lit by the flames of the burning bales of hay. Radagast asks the characters to act as a reserve and plug any gaps in the line.

- The battle is soon joined with a crashing of arms, screams of the injured and roaring of the Orcs. The characters wait. After a while, **Awareness** rolls reveal that the Woodmen have been outflanked! A small group of Orcs has managed to take the gate of the palisade...

No-one else has noticed and they are distracted by the threat in front of them. Time for some heroics!

The Fight for the Gate

Run the fight using two Orc-soldiers for every companion. If any hero hangs back in rearward stance, unengaged Orc soldiers can target them using their spears.

- Additionally, every time that a companion rolls an icon during the fight, another Orc-soldier joins the fray at the end of the round. This may happen a number of times equal to the number of companions in the fellowship.

The Magic of Radagast

Whenever a hero or an Orc involved in the fight rolls a ᚠ, make a note of it. Don't hide it, but on the contrary let the players know that something peculiar just happened. Choose one effect among the following (or roll a Success die):

1. If the roll was made by a companion as an attack, the target is killed automatically; if the roll was made by an attacking Orc, the creature drops its weapons instead and escapes after having looked with a terrified expression at the hero.

2. A white stag is seen standing perfectly still and imperturbable in the middle of the fight. A blink of an eye later, it is gone. The companions are left with the impression that a longer lapse of time just passed.

3. Sweet female voices are heard singing in the distance, despite the deafening din of the battle: every companion gains one point of Hope.

4. A breeze from the West makes the leaves rustle and the boughs shake. The sky turns a lighter shade.

5. An Orc is blinded by hundreds of black butterflies that suddenly swarm upon him! He is quickly felled by arrows shot by the Woodmen.

6. High up in the air, high voices as of birds of prey can be heard. Sometimes, Orcs seem to disappear into thin air, as if something just plucked them out of the ground and cast them into the dark night sky.

Radagast arrives as the heroes kill the last Orc, or when a total of three ᚠ icons have been rolled. With him arrives the sudden break of day, and the rout of the enemy. No one involved in the fight has anticipated the dawn, as the night seems to have lasted but a few hours to everyone involved.

Aftermath

Radagast makes sure that the characters' deeds are widely known. If that Orc-band had taken Woodland Hall, then a long and bitter war would have set the western eaves of Mirkwood aflame. End on a victory feast, with a Woodman singing a new tale - the Saviours of Woodland Hall.